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DURKHEIM ON EDUCATION AND SOCIETY:
AN EXAMINATION OF HIS IDEAS

by



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A THESIS

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The undersigned certify that they have read, and recommend to the Faculty of Graduate Studies for acceptance, a thesis entitled "Durkheim on Education and Society: An Examination of His Ideas" submitted by Kailash Chandra Agrawal in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the degree of Master of Education.

ABSTRACT

The basic objective of this study is to describe and critically examine some of the important elements of Durkheim's ideas on sociology, society and education.

The Durkheimian sociological method has three significant points: (1) that all social phenomena are characterized by corresponding social facts which have a reality sui generis; these social facts are distinct from individual facts and also irreducible to psychological explanations; (2) that all social facts must be observed, selected and verified in the same way as the facts of natural or physical sciences; and (3) that social facts do not exist in isolation -- to understand them a comparative historical approach is required. As Durkheim is opposed to reductionism in sociology, it seems strange that he succumbs to a sort of reductionism while maintaining that social facts must be studied like the facts of physical sciences. He seems to disregard the point that 'facts' of human behavior have a different nature from the 'facts' of physical sciences.

Durkheim considers man primarily as selfish and given to the satisfaction of his own infinite appetites and desires. To keep order and cohesion in society, Durkheim believes, individuals must be made to feel inferior and dwarfed by the reality that is 'society'. Thus, for Durkheim, society is the supreme reality, and it is also the source of all that is good in man. Society, at a given place and time, develops all its social institutions which are just right for its needs and survival and growth. Durkheim almost equates society and God claiming that society creates religion. The idea that

social milieu is a determinant of an individual's personality, behavior and 'life chances' perhaps cannot be discounted by anyone; but to assert, as Durkheim does, that an individual has a reality of a lower order than that of society may well lack scientific validity and, indeed, is questionable. Social phenomena or human-behavior patterns are too complex to be reduced to, or explained by, univariable factors of any social science.

Durkheim defines education as the socialization of younger generations by adult generations. Pedagogy, for him, is reflection on education; its objective is to prescribe how and what must be done in education. The social nature of education is now well recognized; but to insist, like Durkheim, that educational practices are developed to satisfy societal needs is to support the power groups, which are invariably in the minority and have vested interests in society. To equate elite and governing groups to the whole society is like considering a part equal to the whole.

In the contemporary social life when the ideas of individual 'freedom' and 'alienation' are being debated persistently, Durkheim's educational and social thought provides fertile ground for continuing controversy.

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I hope this indulgence on their part, as I perceive it, will not be construed by anyone as 'non-academic' or 'intellectual favoritism' or 'scholarly nepotism'

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CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

I. GENERAL REMARKS

When one thinks about the varying concepts of education,¹ advanced over the centuries by scholars, one may well find oneself floundering in an explication of a notion which is precise and on which there is a consensus. Also, since a human being lives invariably in a group or society,² the role of society in educating individuals

¹The problem of defining 'education' has persisted. What is education? Is it unfolding the inherent capacities of an individual? Or, is it imparting information about the external world? Or, again, is it synonymous with interaction between man and environment, physical and social? See, for example, Charles J. Brauner and Hobart W. Burns, Problems in Education and Philosophy (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1965), pp. 15-20. For a distinction between the terms education, training and schooling, which are often confused with one another, see, for example, Standard College Dictionary (Funk & Wagnalls Co., Canadian Edition by Longmans Canada Ltd., 1963), p. 240. Therein, education is "the development and cultivation of the innate powers of the mind which may be gained by one's own efforts". Training, on the other hand, is "education aimed at producing a particular ability or character" while schooling is "formal training", such as that one gets in a school, college or university. In this connection, it is interesting to note also the comments of Marcus Long, Professor of Philosophy, University of Toronto: "I think one of our most progressive steps today would be to abandon the word education and accept a humbler title, namely schooling. For what we are doing is something that happens in the school." The Toronto Education Quarterly, Vol. VII, No. 1 (Autumn 1967), p. 8.

²The term 'society', like 'education', though widely used, is equally vague but here it is used in the same sense as in common parlance. For a short note on its usage, see G. Duncan Mitchell (ed.), A Dictionary of Sociology (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1968), pp. 194-195.

provides yet another area replete with competing ideologies and opinions.³

Emile Durkheim (1858-1917) is well known for having helped in establishing sociology on a scientific foundation as well as a distinct branch of knowledge. Though his important works are related to the study and analysis of social structures and institutions,⁴ he also thought deeply and made attempts to analyze and understand education in its relationship to the social system. He gave weekly lectures on pedagogy while on the Faculty of Letters at Bordeaux between 1887 and 1902. In 1902 he was appointed to the chair of Science of Education at the Sorbonne which he occupied until his death in 1917. Throughout this period, it seems, he spent one-third to two-thirds of his teaching time on pedagogy.⁵ At the moment two

³ In this connection one may ask questions like these: How education and society are, or should be related? Can education change society? Or, only a social change will produce a change in education? The answers to such questions may well depend on one's images of individual and society.

⁴ His most important works are considered to be four in number: (1) The Elementary Forms of the Religious Life: A Study in Religious Sociology (French edition in 1912, English translation in 1915); (2) The Division of Labor in Society (French edition in 1893, English translation in 1933); (3) The Rules of Sociological Method (French edition in 1895, English translation in 1938); (4) Suicide: A Study in Sociology (French edition in 1897, English translation in 1951). For a comprehensive bibliography on Durkheim's works, see Kurt H. Wolff (ed.) Essays on Sociology and Philosophy (New York: Harper & Row, Harper Torchbook Edition, 1964), pp. 437-445.

⁵ Brian S. Crittenden, "Durkheim: Sociology of Knowledge and Educational Theory", Studies in Philosophy and Education, Vol. IV, No. 2 (Fall 1965), p. 207.

collections of his lectures on education have been translated from French into English.⁶

II. PURPOSE OF THE STUDY

There are two purposes:

- (1) to examine Durkheim's sociological method, and
- (2) to examine Durkheim's concept of education and its relationship to society and sociology.

III. A REFERENCE TO RELATED LITERATURE

Fauconnet has commented on the pedagogical works of Durkheim as a whole.⁷ Lear has described the role of Durkheim as an educator,⁸ while Ottaway has given a similar description, and explicated Durkheim's "Educational Sociology" as well.⁹ On the other hand, Crittenden has

⁶ Durkheim, Education and Sociology, trans. S. D. Fox (New York: The Free Press, 1956); Moral Education: A Study in the Theory and Application of the Sociology of Education, trans. E. K. Wilson and H. Schnurer (New York: The Free Press, 1961).

⁷ Paul Fauconnet, "The Pedagogical Work of Emile Durkheim", American Journal of Sociology, Vol. XXVIII, pp. 529-553. The theme of this paper is similar to his introduction in Education and Sociology, trans. S. D. Fox, 1956, pp. 27-57.

⁸ Elmer N. Lear, "Emile Durkheim as Educator", Journal of Educational Sociology, Vol. 34 (1961), pp. 193-204.

⁹ A. K. C. Ottaway, "The Educational Sociology of Emile Durkheim", The British Journal of Sociology, Vol. VI, (1955), pp. 213-227. See also his paper, "Durkheim on Education", The British Journal of Educational Studies, Vol. XVI (February 1968), pp. 5-16.

tried to explicate Durkheim's "Sociology of Knowledge" from his several works, and then attempted to relate it to his "Educational Theory".¹⁰ Finally, he has tried to assert that, according to Durkheimian thought, the role of education in social reconstruction is very limited, and Durkheim has been consistent on this issue in his thinking.

IV. SCOPE OF THE STUDY

Durkheim's book, Moral Education, contains a series of lectures he had given in a course on moral education at the Sorbonne in 1902-3. The laws of the Third Republic between 1881 and 1901 in France had gradually brought about education under the control of the State, thereby depriving the Church of this prerogative, and in the schools the teaching of religious principles was forbidden. Durkheim was deeply concerned at this state of affairs, for he was convinced that without some form of moral education a society could not possibly survive, and social disintegration would result. Consequently, he tried to develop a moral education in his lectures in terms of rational principles alone. In other words, his aim was to work out a secular moral education or a secular morality which could be practised by French children without violating the Third Republic laws. In these lectures, contained in Moral Education, he has analyzed the elements of such a morality, and has also shown how to develop these elements in the child. It is important, however, to note that in his lectures he has not tried "to formulate moral education for man in general",

¹⁰ Brian S. Crittenden, op. cit., pp. 207-254.

and he has made it clear that such a moral education is suitable only "for men of our time in this country [France] ".¹¹ Thus, his lectures, in the book, Moral Education, were specifically directed at the French society of his times; therefore, one can argue that their relevance to the present times and to non-French societies can hardly be proved.¹²

On the other hand, Durkheim's lectures, Education and Sociology, the writer thinks, are general and go beyond the needs of France of his times. There are four lectures in this collection: the first two were given in 1911, the third in 1903, and the fourth in 1905. As a matter of fact, and interestingly enough, the first two lectures are not only the latest (compared to the remaining two, or to those in Moral Education), but they also seem to contain all the salient points of Durkheimian thought on the topic.¹³

The focus of the present study is, thus, Durkheim's

¹¹ Durkheim, Moral Education, trans. E. K. Wilson and H. Schnurer, p. 3.

¹² In this study such an argument will neither be proved nor refuted. But, in this connection, it is appropriate to note one of the main themes of Durkheimian sociological thought that all social institutions and systems are developed to meet the particular needs of a society at a given place and for a given time. See, for example, Education and Sociology, trans. S. D. Fox, p. 95. Hence, in the opinion of the writer, Durkheim's Moral Education can be ignored while examining his ideas on education, pedagogy, society and sociology as he has propounded in his Education and Sociology.

¹³ The third lecture in Education and Sociology seems to be repetition of what he has said in the first two. The fourth lecture appears to have a little different theme, for therein he talks about the evolution and role of secondary education in French society.

Education and Sociology (trans. S. D. Fox, 1956). This is a brief study; therefore, it does not purport to be a study in depth of Durkheim's social and sociological thought. But, wherever necessary or relevant, while examining his ideas on education and society, references to his other works, which are available in English translations, will be made and those ideas examined as well.

CHAPTER II

DURKHEIM'S SOCIOLOGICAL METHOD

Here two basic elements of his methodology will be examined, viz., social facts and a comparative historical framework in sociology. The rationale for choosing these two elements lies in the Durkheimian thought on education itself, wherein he argues to consider education as a social fact, and to study it within a comparative historical framework.¹

I. SOCIAL FACTS

Durkheim raises clearly, perhaps for the first time, the problem of the facts with which a sociologist deals. In social life, he suggests, there are facts which are inexplicable in terms of physical or psychological analysis; they are the ways of acting, of thinking and feeling which are external to the individual; they are a reality sui generis; and they have a coercive or constraining influence over the individual.² They have an individual component but have an extra-individual source; they are born by the interaction or association of individuals, and only such an interaction gives rise to them, but they cannot be reduced to the conscious intellectual activity of any one individual. An individual may elaborate upon the collective product, or he

¹In the opinion of the writer, all the four lectures in Education and Sociology substantiate such an inference.

²Durkheim, The Rules of Sociological Method (Free Press Paperback edition, 1964), p. 3.

may add to it (for example, coining a new word or phrase), but his additions and elaborations become social facts only through the action and interaction with other members of the society who also contribute their own ideas and feelings. And, from this combination and alteration of individual thinking, ideas, actions, feelings, a new social synthesis is achieved, a new social fact is born. Illustrations of social facts include moral rules and precepts, religious beliefs and practices, judicial laws, myths, folklore, proverbs, popular sayings and language itself. Social facts sometimes exist as social currents of opinion in the absence of any clearly defined social organization, for example, waves of enthusiasm, of anger, of hate, that grip individuals in a crowd.³

Universality is not the distinguishing mark of social facts; a thought that is in every individual consciousness does not for that reason become social.

It is, however, the collective aspects of the beliefs, tendencies, and practices of a group that characterize truly social phenomena . . . They thus acquire a body, a tangible form, and constitute a reality in their own right, quite distinct from the individual facts which produce it.⁴

Thus, a social fact has three characteristics:
(1) It is general throughout a given society and not confined to a few individuals only; (2) It is a reality sui generis, and is external to the individual, and cannot

³ Ibid., p. 8. See also Edward A. Tirayakian, Sociologism and Existentialism (Englewood Cliffs: Prentice-Hall, 1962), Ch. II.

⁴ Durkheim, The Rules of Sociological Method, p. 7.

be modified by a simple effort of his own will; and (3) It has a coercive power, or it exercises a constraint on individuals.

The Durkheimian idea of sociology is fundamentally based on a theory of the social facts. Durkheim's aim is to establish sociology as an objective and empirical science conforming to the model of other well recognized and established sciences like physics or chemistry. The subject matter of such a sociology, for Durkheim, is the collection and study of social facts. Since social facts are a reality sui generis, they cannot be reduced to, or explained by less complex or non-social facts. He argues that just as psychological phenomena of consciousness cannot be accounted for simply by the physiological or biochemical properties of nerve cells, and just as physiological or biological phenomena cannot be explained solely by their chemical elements, so the tendency (which existed in his times and which he opposed vigorously) toward psychological reductionism, or any type of reductionism while explaining social phenomena, must be rejected.

He argues, further, that a science has three characteristics:⁵ (1) that its subject matter is specific and is distinguishable from the subject matter of all the other sciences; (2) that it has facts which can be observed, selected and verified publicly; and (3) that it "studies these facts to know them, and only to know them, in an absolutely disinterested fashion".⁶ In other words,

⁵ Durkheim, Education and Sociology, 1956, pp. 92-94.

⁶ Ibid., p. 93.

scientific knowledge is "to express reality, not to judge it".⁷

For Durkheim, sociology is such a science and its subject matter is 'social facts' which, he argues, can be observed, selected and verified like the physical facts, for example, of physics. Furthermore, he advances the thesis that (1) social facts must be regarded as things (and not ideas) and they must be observed from outside, and objectively, as is the procedure in any empirical science; (2) in the explanation of a social phenomenon, the efficient cause which produces it and the function the social phenomenon fulfills must be separated and not confused;⁸ and (3) the cause of a social fact should be sought among the preceding social facts "and not among the states of the individual consciousness".⁹ Thus, the explanation of social life lies in the nature of the society itself and not in its individual members.

Though Durkheim speaks, with great fervor, of science and scientific method, and though he works hard to make sociology an empirical science, yet it is easy to find some fundamental contradictions in his viewpoints.¹⁰ These contradictions become more conspicuous when one notes that in all his studies he gives first importance to the problems of definition and classification.

He argues that one of the characteristics of science

⁷ Ibid., p. 94.

⁸ Durkheim, The Rules of Sociological Method, p. 95.

⁹ Ibid., p. 110.

¹⁰ Raymond Aron considers him more as a philosopher than as a scientist. See his Main Currents in Sociological Thought, 1967, Vol. II, p. 64.

is that it expresses reality or explains it, but it does not judge or evaluate it. Yet, at one place he maintains: "If Science cannot indicate the best goal to us, how can it inform us about the best means to reach it?"¹¹ Here Durkheim wants science to tell man what he should do, and what goals should be set up by him. In a later chapter it will be shown that he considers education as a science the task of which is not to set goals -- this task belongs to Pedagogy which is, therefore, not a science.

Durkheim is constantly opposed to reductionism in the explanation of any phenomenon. For him, as has already been indicated, a science must have a distinct subject matter and an explanation of a fact therein must be in terms of other facts within the same science; otherwise, he asks, how can its subject matter be considered distinct from other sciences? But in the crucial area of methodology of his sociology, he seems to have succumbed to reductionism of a sort without doubt. He has maintained that social facts are to be studied as things, in other words, in the same way as physical facts are studied in natural sciences. But such an argument or procedure ignores a basic difference between the two kinds of phenomena, physical and human (or social). He seems to fail to recognize the difference between a 'fact' in natural science and a 'fact' in the study of man as a historical-social being. A natural scientist examines atoms and electrons and other physical entities; and, as far as is known to us, this scientific knowledge gained by the scientist has no meaning whatsoever for the atoms or electrons or any physical entity. These physical entities

¹¹ Durkheim, The Rules of Sociological Method, p. 48.

neither see any meaning in any natural phenomena of which they are a part, nor do they react to the knowledge a natural scientist gains about them. This is not true for the social sciences. Here the observational field within which a social scientist works does have a structure and meaning for the individual human beings who live, think and act within it.¹² And the knowledge a social scientist gains about human behavior changes the observational field for his subsequent observations, for, the knowledge of a social reality affects the behavior of human beings either as individuals or collectivities; such a knowledge is not non-reactive in human or social phenomena as it is in physical or natural phenomena. The concept of a social reality, argues Winch, enters into a person's behavior in a way quite different from that in which a concept of physics influences the behavior of a material object.¹³

In the case of the notion of constraint, which is a characteristic of social fact according to Durkheim, it is possible to assert that its ambiguity is twofold. In the first place, the word constraint has a more restricted meaning than the one Durkheim assigns to it. Tarde argues that this idea of constraint limits the range of social

¹² Alfred Schutz, Collected Papers, Vol. I, The Problem of Social Reality (The Hague: Martinus Nijhoff, 1962), pp. 5-6 cited by Brian S. Crittenden, op. cit., p. 251.

¹³ Peter Winch, The Idea of a Social Science, and its Relation to Philosophy (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1958), p. 128 cited by Brian S. Crittenden, op. cit., p. 210. On such an issue a theoretical physicist, W. Heitler has written a small book: Man and Science (New York: Basic Books, 1963), wherein he advances similar arguments. There seems to be persisting reaction against scientism in human or social behavior. Another interesting book, according to the writer, is by Floyd W. Matson, The Broken Image: Man, Science and Society (George Braziller, 1964; Anchor Books edition, paperback, 1966).

facts.¹⁴ It then seems to refer only to such phenomena as political conquest or master-slave relationships involving violence and force. As a counter-argument, in favor of Durkheim, one can say that Durkheim means moral constraint rather than physical constraint (which no doubt is sometimes present, for example, in state laws). But such a counter-argument creates the problem, viz., how internalized ideals and norms and beliefs can be possibly described by the term 'constraint'? There is an important theoretical difference between forcing an individual to act by the threats of penalties, legal or otherwise, and modifying his behavior by suggesting to him ideals and norms which he gradually internalizes, and, consequently, acts voluntarily without apparent compulsion, or under threats of punishment. In some cases both aspects may be present, viz., fear of punishment and internalization, then it may be difficult to distinguish the two empirically. An example of such a possibility is obedience to traffic laws by individuals.

The second ambiguity refers to the question: "Is constraint the essence of the social phenomenon, or is it merely an external characteristic which helps us to recognize it?"¹⁵ Durkheim accepts the second alternative because to him constraint is an external characteristic

¹⁴ Tarde was Durkheim's contemporary in France. He had developed his own social-psychological theory of Imitation to explain all human behavior. He made a bitter attack on Durkheim's concept of social fact. Durkheim, too, reacted with equal vigor against Tarde's idea of Imitation. It seems this Durkheim-Tarde controversy raged for a quarter of a century. For a short account of it, see Howard Becker and Harry E. Barnes, Social Thought From Lore to Science (New York: Dover Publications, 1961), Vol. III, pp. 854-858.

¹⁵ Raymond Aron, op. cit., p. 63.

which enables one to recognize a social fact. He has, however, failed to remove the confusion between "the external character and the essential definition" in his writings.¹⁶

II. SOCIOLOGY AND HISTORY

As has been shown, Durkheim's aim is to make sociology an empirical science. Yet, in all his socio-logical works, one can discern a historical dimension of social facts which he constantly specifies. It is not alone a historical framework which he prescribes for studying any social fact, but there is a comparative element present as well while doing so, and without which he considers the historical framework inadequate. This comparative aspect is perhaps obvious from his preference to Mills' Method of concomitant variation in his methodology.

Any social phenomenon, or social fact does not exist in isolation. It "is never capable of being isolated in the same way as a stone would be if picked up by a mineralogist and carried for analysis to his laboratory."¹⁷ One has to observe a social fact in its past context; one has to note the social facts which have preceded it. Talking about education as a social fact, Durkheim says:

For only history can penetrate under the surface of our present educational system; only history can

¹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁷ G. L. Duprat, "Social Facts", Sociology and Social Research, Vol. XIX, p. 8.

analyze it; only history can show us of what elements it is formed, on what conditions each of them depends, how they are interrelated; only history, in a word, can bring us to the long chain of causes and effects of which it is the result.¹⁸

In his preface to L'ANNEE SOCIOLOGIQUE (Vol. I), he asserted:

. . . Yet history can be a science only to the extent that it explains, and explanation cannot proceed except through comparison. Otherwise, even simple description is hardly possible; one cannot adequately describe a unique fact, or a fact of which one has only rare instances, because one does not see it adequately . . . We actually serve the cause of history, therefore, if we persuade the historian to go beyond his customary vantage point, to look beyond the country and the period which are the objects of his special studies, and to examine general questions raised by the particular facts which he observes.

As soon as history takes on the character of a comparative discipline, it becomes indistinguishable from sociology. Sociology in turn, not only cannot do without history, but it needs historians who are, at the same time, sociologists . . . Thus, however antagonistic they may be, these two disciplines naturally tend to veer toward one another, and everything suggests that they will be called upon to fuse into one common study, which recombines and unifies elements of both. For it appears equally impossible either that the historian -- the student whose role it is to discover facts -- ignore the comparisons into which the facts must enter, or that the sociologist, who compares them, ignore how they have been discovered. To produce historians who know how to see historical facts as sociologists do, or -- and this amounts to the same thing -- to produce sociologists who master all of the techniques of history, is the goal which must

¹⁸ Durkheim, Education and Sociology, pp. 152-153.

be striven for from both ends Fustel de Coulanges was fond of repeating that true sociology is history: nothing is more incontestable provided that history is carried on sociologically.¹⁹

This no doubt supports the view that, for Durkheim, history is of vital importance in studying social facts. At times he thinks that sociology and history are undifferentiable provided historians use a comparative approach and it is carried on sociologically. This probably compels Harry Alpert to call him "a sociological imperialist".²⁰ Alpert suggests that Durkheim is a man so devoted to sociology that he can accept anything -- geography, economics, history, linguistics -- if these operate "within sociologically relevant frameworks".²¹ Thus, for Durkheim, according to Alpert, history is fine and essential, provided it is done sociologically and uses a comparative method. Perhaps Alpert is correct, for Durkheim no doubt believes so, as has been indicated above. Bellah quotes the "most extreme statement on the subject" made by Durkheim which is as follows:

In reality, there is nothing in my knowledge of sociology which merits the name, which doesn't have a historical character There are not two methods or two opposed conceptions. That which will be true of history will be true of sociology.²²

¹⁹ Quoted in Kurt H. Wolff, Essays on Sociology and Philosophy (Harper Torchbook edition, 1964), pp. 342-343.

²⁰ Harry Alpert, "Emile Durkheim: A Perspective and Appreciation", American Sociological Review, Vol. 24, No. 4, p. 463.

²¹ Ibid.

²² Robert N. Bellah, "Durkheim and History", American Sociological Review, Vol. 24, No. 4, p. 448.

One perhaps has to give an allowance to Durkheim when he exhibits excessive zeal and passion for sociologism or historicism or both, as is obvious from his several pronouncements quoted above. There is no doubt, however, that every social phenomenon has a past which directly or indirectly, explicitly or implicitly, has had an impact on its present form and structure. There are deeper underlying forces in each social fact, similar to subconscious or unconscious forces and motives in an individual (as suggested by Freud), and they must be uncovered if the social fact is to be completely explained or understood.

In his Latin thesis, he seems to maintain that both the historical past and the present social milieu are causal factors in a sociological explanation,²³ but later on, in The Rules of Sociological Method, he rejects both the causal finalism and historical determinism. Here he takes the position that only efficient causes are to be discovered, and not ultimate causes of social facts. Such efficient causes of social facts are to be found only in the existing social milieu, since neither their sequences of the past historical stages nor their hypothetical sequences of future stages are valid. To some this might give an impression that Durkheim has renounced the historical framework, but one must not forget his argument that currently operable variables of a social milieu, or social fact cannot be understood without a knowledge of its history.

Durkheim's insistence on the comparative method of history in sociology appears very important. His fundamen-

²³ Ibid., pp. 449-450.

tal argument to support this viewpoint lies in the efficacy of the Mills' Method of concomitant variation in logic of establishing a valid proof. He ridicules those sociologists who believe in indiscriminately collecting piles of facts and bales of documents to prove anything. He demands that facts must be selected and severely examined and criticized before advancing them to support a hypothesis.²⁴ It is not their quantity but their quality and relevance that ultimately matters in a scientific study of social facts. The use of comparative method requires collecting reliable historical data from several societies of the same species or type. But it can also be used in a single society provided data for other similar societies are not possible and provided the data for the society in question are available for a considerable period of time, and they reveal extensive systematic variation within themselves.²⁵

²⁴ Durkheim, The Rules of Sociological Method, p. 133.

²⁵ Durkheim rejects the Method of agreement or of difference, especially the former.

CHAPTER III

EDUCATION, SOCIOLOGY AND SOCIETY

In all his studies, Durkheim seems to have given supreme importance to society and the science of society, viz., sociology. But, as has been indicated earlier, all his university life was spent officially as a professor of education, though he taught sociology at the same time as well. However, he seems to consider himself primarily as a 'sociologist' and not as an 'educator', for, in one of his lectures he says:

As a sociologist, it is above all as a sociologist that I shall speak to you of education
Indeed, I regard as the prime postulate of all pedagogical speculation that education is an eminently social thing in its origins as in its functions, and that, therefore, pedagogy depends on sociology more closely than on any other science.¹

For Durkheim, 'education' and 'pedagogy' are two distinct branches of knowledge and both of them are dependent upon sociology. In this chapter, therefore, his ideas on education and pedagogy, and the relationship of these two to sociology and society will be examined. Since education, as it is usually understood, has two aspects: individual and social, it is relevant to examine Durkheimian thought on the individual and

¹ Durkheim, Education and Sociology, p. 114. Since this chapter contains a large number of quotations from this book, henceforth such quotations, instead of being footnoted will be identified by the relevant page numbers within parentheses in the main text itself. All other quotations will be footnoted as usual.

society before discussing his ideas on education, pedagogy, and their dependence on sociology.

I. DURKHEIM ON THE INDIVIDUAL AND SOCIETY

For Durkheim, society is a reality, sui generis, it is a social fact. Although it is composed of individuals, its properties are different from those of its members, just as an organic compound in chemistry has distinct and different properties from its constituent elements. He also appears to assert that since a society is a product of its individuals associating and interacting with one another, it is, therefore, more complex than any individual; and, in his opinion, whatever is more complex is superior to less complex elements; consequently, society is physically and morally superior to any individual or all the individuals taken together. His position is, thus, a reflection of Comte who, thinking similarly, considers sociology the superior science because it studies the most complex of all phenomena.² It is interesting to note that Durkheim fails to realize that his assertion is apparently metaphysical in nature, though, as has been shown earlier, he wants sociology to be purged of speculation and metaphysics.

Durkheim thinks that each man leads a double existence: one purely individual, having a purely physiological origin; the other extra-individual, being the extension of society.³ These two elements are in constant

² Edward A. Tiryakian, Sociologism and Existentialism, p. 23.

³ Kurt H. Wolff (ed.), Essays on Sociology and Philosophy, Harper Torchbook edition, 1964, passim, pp. 325-340.

conflict because the satisfaction of the demands of the one often requires the sacrifice of the demands of the other. Though, they are in a continuous struggle with each other, yet, one cannot be destroyed at the cost of the other. The 'individual' element cannot survive by itself, and the 'extra-individual' or 'social' element would be void of any form without the former. He further believes that this conflict will never cease; on the other hand, the conflict may become increasingly intense as civilization and complexity of society increase, demanding ever more self-discipline on the part of the individual.

Durkheim differentiates between personality and individuality,⁴ and such a distinction is along the same lines as above. Personality has its source in the society and is composed of supra-individual elements; while individuality is the biochemical nature of the concrete human agent.

In describing the reality of society, he has often used the French term 'la conscience collective'.⁵ For Durkheim this is composed of "the totality of beliefs

⁴ Edward A. Tiryakian, op. cit., p. 51. Mead's distinction between 'I' and 'Me' follows the same pattern.

⁵ English language requires two words -- 'conscience' and 'consciousness' -- to translate the French term, conscience, which incorporates in itself the two concepts of the two English words. A doubt often is expressed about its English equivalent: collective conscience or collective consciousness? The former has an ethical connotation, the latter, a psychological one. Here, in this chapter, the English translation, 'collective consciousness' will be used. See, in this connection, G. Duncan Mitchell (ed.), A Dictionary of Sociology, 1968, p. 32. Also, Kurt H. Wolff (ed.), op. cit., p. 78.

and sentiments common to average citizens of the same society",⁶ and it is a reality sui generis. This collective consciousness is distinct from any, or the total of all the individual consciousnesses; indeed, as he describes, it is "the consciousness of consciousnesses",⁷ and is supreme to all other consciousnesses.

Discussing the problem of human nature and its social conditions he writes:

For society can exist only if it penetrates the consciousness of individuals and fashions it in 'its image and resemblance' The supreme product of collective activity is that ensemble of intellectual and moral goods that we call civilization . . . man is man only because he is civilized . . . It is only by historical analysis that we can discover what makes up man, since it is only in the course of history that he is formed.⁸

The last sentence in the above quotation represents an important aspect of Durkheimian thought on the individual and society. It no doubt represents his continued attachment to a historical framework while studying society. But besides this, it refers to his evolutionary notion of society. In his book, The Division of Labor in Society, he describes the earliest form of society which is characterized by mechanical solidarity, similar to the solidarity of elements and molecules in physical bodies. In such a society, which is the most primitive one in the opinion

⁶ Durkheim, The Division of Labor in Society, p. 79.

⁷ Quoted in Pitirim A. Sorokin, Contemporary Sociological Theories, Harper Torchbook edition, 1964, p. 465.

⁸ Kurt H. Wolff (ed.), op. cit., p. 325.

of Durkheim, personal desires count little. The collective consciousness is so formidable and strong that individual consciousness hardly exists -- it is "a simple dependency of the collective type and follows all its movements, just as the object which is owned follows those of its owner".⁹ Thus, in such a society the individual person does not exist, or historically speaking, at that point in societal evolution 'the individual person' did not exist. Gradually as the volume, physical and moral densities of the society increased, the individuality of the person increasingly asserted itself, as it is implied today in the conception of democracy. This does not mean that lessening of homogeneity and the corresponding increment in heterogeneity in social life has decreased the power of the collective consciousness. With the increasing division of labor, a new social nexus has emerged which now ties individuals to society -- this he calls organic solidarity. In such a society, where the functional interdependence of its members is vital, the individuality of man has come into its own. Thus, according to Durkheim, it has been a long historical road, for the individual person to assert himself in society. But the collective consciousness remains supreme to individual consciousness; as it was in the primitive society with mechanical solidarity, so it is now in the present society with organic solidarity. In fact, Durkheim believes that the greater the variety of individual consciousnesses which come into mutual association, the richer the social life will become, and conversely.¹⁰ One almost feeds upon the

⁹ Quoted in Edward A. Tiryakian, op. cit., p. 53.

¹⁰ Ibid., p. 51.

other and grows; though, for Durkheim, one of the two, viz., collective consciousness, is supreme and more vital.

II. DEFINITION OF EDUCATION AND ITS NATURE¹¹

Durkheim cites the definition by John Stuart Mill according to which education is:

all that we ourselves do and all that others do for us to the end of bringing us closer to the perfection of our nature. In its most widely accepted sense, it includes even indirect effects on the character and faculties of men produced by things having quite a different objective: by laws, by forms of government, the industrial arts, and even by physical phenomena, independent of human will, such as climate, soil, and locality. (p. 61)

He argues that such a definition is confusing because it includes a variety of influences which are different from one another, while we should consider only that influence which adults exercise on youth. Thus, for him education "is the influence exercised by adult generations on those that are not yet ready for social life". (p. 71) In this definition, 'influence' and 'adult generations' appear to be the key terms for Durkheim. He says at another place:

Education is the influence exerted on children by parents and teachers. This influence is always present and it is general. There is no period in social life, there is not, so to speak, even a moment in the day when the young generations are

¹¹ Durkheim seems to have criticized the objectives of education advanced by Kant and James Mill under the heading "Definitions of Education. Critical Examination". In the writer's opinion, a definition is different from an objective; therefore a criticism of one under the other is either a translation error or if this is not so, then it is illogical on Durkheim's part. See his Education and Sociology, pp. 61-67.

not in contact with their elders and when, therefore, they are not receiving from them some educational influence. For this influence does not make itself felt only in the very brief moments when parents or teachers are consciously and by explicit teaching, communicating the results of their experience to those who come after them. There is an unconscious education that never ceases. By our example, by the words that we utter, by the actions that we perform, we constantly mold our children. (p. 91)

A question now arises: How does the process of education take place? Durkheim believes that "education does not make a man out of nothing" (p. 82); he thinks that a child has "innate" predispositions "which are very general and very vague". (p. 82) These predispositions are not fixed or predetermined to act in particular directions only. For example, an intelligent child can be educated to use his intelligence either as a mathematician or an engineer; or a doctor, or any specialized task, depending upon his circumstances. Thus, these innate predispositions or faculties in man are very malleable or flexible, which facilitates the educational process.

For Durkheim, the educational process is similar to the hypnotic process. He argues that hypnotic suggestions presuppose two conditions: (p. 85)

- (1) the subject is in a state of utter passivity and receptivity. His mind is almost reduced to tabula rasa, his will is almost paralyzed and his consciousness reduced to a blank; thus, suggested ideas do not meet any resistance, and he accepts them totally and acts accordingly;
- (2) as a matter of fact, a complete void in consciousness or mind or in the will never exists; there-

fore, the hypnotizer has to use a commanding tone -- a voice radiating almost an absolute authority, thereby, giving a real feeling to the subject that a contrary action to the hypnotizer's suggestions is not only unlikely but even unthinkable. The hypnotizer's power over the subject is lessened or almost lessened to nil if the former enters into discussion with the latter.

Durkheim maintains that these two conditions are present in the relationships that the educator has with the child, for, (1) the child is passive, his consciousness has a very small number of conceptions with which he can fight against the educator's suggestions, and the child has also the disposition to imitate;¹² (2) the educator is in a position of authority because of his superiority of experiences, and also, the power bestowed by society on him. "By analogy, then one can say that education must be essentially a matter of authority." (p. 87) Such an authority, for Durkheim, is mostly moral in nature. He explains that 'it is not from the outside that the teacher can hold his authority, it is from himself; it can come to him only from an inner faith.' (p. 89) This inner faith is achieved if a teacher, besides believing in his own superior qualities of intelligence and experiences (over the child), believes "in his task and in the importance of his task" (p. 89), like a religious priest who derives his authority from the idea that he has the God's calling. In the case of a teacher such a calling is the calling of the society -- its survival, its growth and

¹² Interestingly enough, Durkheim agrees with Tarde here!

its perpetuation. A teacher must feel that "he too is the agent of a great moral person [society] who surpasses him" (p. 89), just like a priest who derives his inner faith from the knowledge that he speaks in the name of the God. Such a teacher, Durkheim visualizes, will undoubtedly transmit from his own self to the child the respect and the duty for the society which is the source of all morality in man. Education is then a serious and important matter which involves inculcating the sense of duty and of self-sacrifice in the name of, and for society. As a matter of fact, according to Durkheim, "we must choose between God and society".¹³

Summarizing, the Durkheimian notion of education seems to have the following two salient elements:

- (1) It is adults' influences over the younger ones.

These influences take place every moment of a child's life until he is 'ready for social life'.

- (2) Educational process is similar to hypnosis.

Authority and command are the key ideas in education without which it is not possible.

Durkheim's definition of education appears, at its face, precise and without ambiguity. He has criticized John Stuart Mill's definition which equates education to the totality of influences that nature or other men are able to exercise on our intelligence or on our will. He has argued that this definition is confusing; that it combines under 'education' the influences which are essen-

¹³ Quoted in Raymond Aron, Main Currents in Sociological Thought, Vol. II, p. 92. Thus, according to Durkheim, teachers are almost 'educational' priests whose task is to preach and spread 'the gospel' of society.

tially different in nature. He, therefore, wants these influences to be differentiated, and for his own definition chooses only those influences which adult generations exercise on younger generations who are not yet ready for social life. He also admits that 'education' in this sense takes place every moment of a young one's life.

However, when one thinks for a while, one may well see several problems arising from his definition which Durkheim ignores in his zeal and passion to glorify and idolize society almost repetitively, or almost ad nauseum! Perhaps his obsession for society can be traced to the times in which he was born. He was a great patriot and wanted to see French society reorganized and strong. Consequently, he studied deeply the social phenomena and talked at length about solidarity, order, and morality. He thought that education was the best agent to achieve these goals in the French society; therefore, he made repeated references to social nature of education. However, one can ask Durkheim some questions. If 'education' takes place every moment of a child's life, then of what use are schools? If education takes place until one is ready 'for social life', what significance or meaning has the term 'adult education'? If education is similar to the hypnotic process -- then how does it differ from Pavlov's dogs-type conditioning?

III. EDUCATIONAL OBJECTIVES, PEDAGOGY AND SOCIETY

Durkheim points out that man as such, as discussed in traditional philosophical systems, is a fiction:

General man, always and everywhere identical, is a pure abstraction and has never existed in reality.

Real and concrete man changes with the physical and social milieu which surrounds him.¹⁴

Man changes with time and with the change in the milieu he is in. Consequently, to assert like Kant or James Mill, that the goal of education is to enable man to develop all his faculties to perfection, or to make him an instrument of happiness for himself and others, has little meaning. There is no one man, unchanging and constant in his nature, so there cannot be an ideal, perfect, timeless goal of education, according to him. Using a historical, comparative framework Durkheim declares that education has "varied infinitely in time and place".

(p. 64)

Each society develops an education that fulfills its needs: "it is the system of education suitable to this country and to this time". (p. 95) In a given society there are likely to be as many different kinds of education as there are different milieux in it. Every society has its own particular image of man; therefore, it imposes that image upon each of its members, but such an ideal is imposed only up to a certain point beyond which education becomes differentiated according to the particular milieux the society has in its structure.

The goal of education in any society, generally speaking, is to socialize methodically the younger generation. Why? Because:

In each of us . . . there exist two beings
One is made up of all the mental states that apply

¹⁴Quoted in Edward A. Tiriyakian, op. cit., p. 51.

only to ourselves and to the events of our personal lives: this is what might be called the individual being. The other is a system of ideas, sentiments and practices which express in us, not our personality, but the group or different groups of which we are parts; these are religious beliefs, moral beliefs and practices, national or professional traditions, collective opinions of every kind. Their totality forms the social being. To constitute this being in each of us is the end of education.

(pp. 71-72)

Education is a social fact. It is a process by which a child is compelled to acquire proper habits of eating, drinking, sleeping, keeping himself clean, being obedient and showing respect and consideration to others.¹⁵ Constraint is essential in the beginning to impose all these habits, but later the child internalizes them, so outward constraint by the society is lessened. The younger generation is like a tabula rasa consisting of egoistic and asocial beings; society through education creates in them new beings "capable of leading a moral and social life". (p. 72) For Durkheim, "man is man, in fact, only because he lives in society". (p. 76) Durkheim realizes that such notions might give an impression that society and individual are antagonistic to each other, but he hastens to add that this dichotomy is false and that the two "imply each other" and an "individual, in willing society, wills himself". (p. 78)

The educational goals, therefore, are societal and not private. According to Durkheim:

It is idle to think that we can rear our children as we wish. There are customs to which we are bound to conform; if we flout them too severely, they take their vengeance on our children. The

¹⁵ Durkheim, The Rules of Sociological Method, p. 6.

children,, when they are adults, are unable to live with their peers, with whom they are not in accord. (p. 65)

Thus, it is not possible for an individual to deviate from the type of education which exists in his time. An education system does not exist by itself. Other social institutions are related to it, and each is appropriate to the society according to the time and place.

Durkheim thinks that science of education is possible because education is composed of a "totality of practices, of ways of doing things, of customs which constitute perfectly defined facts and which have the same reality as other social facts" (p. 94); therefore it can be objectively observed, its facts categorized and generalizations drawn like any science. He points out that throughout human history, education has implied the influence exerted by one generation on the following generation so that the latter could adapt itself to the social milieu in which it was called upon to live. Consequently, educational practices of every society at any time can be studied scientifically.

Pedagogy, on the other hand, consists of theories of education. Thus, the subject of pedagogy is education and the practices thereof; it is not a science, since it involves speculations and prescriptions. Pedagogical theories do not express or describe reality; they suggest what must be done. These theories cannot be purely speculative; they must be rooted in reality. They must take account of historical past and the present realities; if they ignore these two aspects, pedagogical theories, then, are useless because their application is not possible. Great resistance will be encountered in their

practice, and eventually they might be discarded by the society. If a pedagogical theory is based on the present reality and past historical facts, then it is likely to be put into practice. Therefore, it is essential that pedagogical speculations take into account the findings of the sciences of education, psychology and sociology. Each of the latter sciences will provide useful and necessary facts on which a pedagogue can build a theory which is workable.

Summarizing, Durkheim seems to assert that

- (1) each educational system answers the society's needs at a particular time;
- (2) each social milieu determines its own educational set-up which is just right for it;
- (3) society is in turn the object of the education, that is, the structure of a society determines the structure of education which in its turn has the goal to force individuals to choose society itself as the object of their duty and devotion;
- (4) pedagogy is different from education, and its goal is to prescribe how and what must be done in education. Thus, pedagogy is a speculative knowledge, as opposed to education which is a science.

As in the case of Durkheimian definition of education, here as well, his way of thinking raises several problems. It is quite obvious that he speaks of society and of sociology "with the moral fervor of the prophet".¹⁶ There appears to be a distinct bias in his thinking for upholding society at the cost of the individ-

¹⁶ Raymond Aron, op. cit., p. 88.

ual, so much so that he even equates society to God which, thereby, becomes the source of all morality and power for man. His notion that a teacher is almost an 'educational priest' who should act as an intermediary between the society and the child, using authority and command appears almost completely out-of-tune with the existing notion, wherein a teacher is a friend, a guide and a helper to the child. Lewis A. Coser describes Durkheim's sociology of education as "a sociology of educational constraints".¹⁷

How far does Durkheim consider education as an agent for social change or social reconstruction? As has been specified earlier, Durkheim put stress on education and sociology because he wanted the reconstruction of French society of his time. Durkheim's views, in this connection, appear not only confusing but apparently contradictory. At one place he declares that "there is no man who can make a society have, at a given moment, a system of education other than that which is implied in its structure" (p. 94), yet at another place he exhorts pedagogues to develop theories to reconstruct education to fulfill the existing social needs (pp. 133-134). What pedagogues can do if "for the pedagogical system to function in opposition to the prevailing social system is for Durkheim 'some incomprehensible miracle'".¹⁸ In his book, Suicide, examining the question if education could reduce suicide rates, Durkheim answers no. He says to think otherwise is

to ascribe to education a power it lacks. It is only the image and reflection of society. It

¹⁷ Kurt H. Wolff (ed.), op. cit., p. 228.

¹⁸ Brian S. Crittenden, op. cit., p. 241.

imitates and reproduces the latter in abbreviated form, it does not create it. Education is healthy when people themselves are in a healthy state; but it becomes corrupt with them, being unable to modify itself.¹⁹

Thus, the dilemma which Durkheimian thinking poses is this: if a society has become corrupted and, consequently, if education has become corrupted, then what steps are to be taken? Is there no hope for the society to become healthy again? Durkheim seems to get lost in his contradictory thinking which appears to be an outcome of his deifying society at all costs.

At this stage in this study, one more point of Durkheimian thought on education and society will be examined -- his assertion that society plays a dual role: that it is both the source of the important social facts (like education, morality, religion) and their true object.

Durkheim insists that society as the social milieu determines social facts like education, family, religion, morality -- in other words, these social institutions are conditioned by the social organization that exists at the time. But what is social milieu -- a reality sui generis or simply an analytical category? Is social milieu not the sum total of all these social phenomena and institutions from another point of view? If so, how can anything then explain itself or determine itself?

Consider now Durkheim's view that society is both the source and the object of education or morality. He claims that man is man because he lives in society without which he would be an animal. If man is an animal (without society) and does not have special capacities, then would

¹⁹ Durkheim, Suicide, p. 372.

Durkheim hypothesize that if any set of animals associate and live together as a group they would develop collective representations and collective consciousness as the human society does? It is easy to see that living together is necessary to develop, say, language; but in the absence of man having special capacities, simply living together would not create all that he has created. Durkheim's conclusion that man without society is animal seems to be going too far, particularly so if he considers himself a scientist. Man, as such, is endowed with certain capacities by nature which are not shared by other species. Living together enables man to develop his capacities. But in the absence of society, man does not lose these capacities in himself, as they are endowed on him by nature and not by society. Consequently, the Durkheimian assertion that man is animal without society, or man is man only in society, can very well be challenged and doubted.

Of course, a perpetual question here is: what is 'society' after all? Aron says: "There is no such thing as society; there is no such thing as a society; there are only human groups."²⁰ Moreover, when Durkheim points out that society wants . . . , how does one find out what society wants? By means of a questionnaire or opinionnaire? How does one decide a societal need if on a particular issue there are two or more than two group preferences -- and this, no doubt, is often the case.²¹

²⁰ Raymond Aron, op. cit., p. 93.

²¹ What people think, or want, or feel, or how they act are problems in social sciences which have continued to defy precise and adequate solutions so far. See, for example, Martin Fishbein (ed.), Readings in Attitude Theory and Measurement (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1967), which contains a series of papers on the problem of definition and measurement of attitude.

CHAPTER IV

DURKHEIMIAN EDUCATION: ITS RELEVANCE TODAY

It is now nearly 50 years since Durkheim left this world,¹ and one may like to know or examine the relevance of his ideas, particularly his theme of education and society, to the times in which we presently live.

Perhaps every generation tends to imagine that it is living in very troubled and crucial times;² consequently, the present thinking and feelings throughout the world among men and women, young or old, of inner anxiety, of economic troubles, of nuclear destruction, sometimes of political uncertainties, or of the increasing gap between the generations may not be classified as unique except that ours is probably the most 'self-conscious' age (so far in history) due to mass media of communications and increasing international interactions.

Whether human nature as such has changed or is changing with time, is no issue here, though, as may be noted, Durkheim believes that human nature is variable, determined by its social milieu. But, there is no doubt that increasing population, unexpected technological advancements and wide uses of mass communication devices have created situations and problems today (and also increased their intensity in man's mind) which were

¹ Durkheim died on November 15, 1917. See Kurt H. Wolff (ed.), op. cit., p. 17.

² For some ideas on such a theme see Eric and Mary Josephson (eds.) Man Alone: Alienation in Modern Society (New York: Dell Publishing Co., 1962), pp. 9-53.

probably not faced by earlier generations.

For Durkheim, education is a process by which an individual is made or forced to fit in with the society or the social milieu in which he lives; otherwise, according to him, society cannot survive. It is simply the influence of 'adult generations' on the younger ones so that the latter may play their social roles adequately. It is society which determines, in Durkheimian thought, the goals of the social institution, that is, education.

One may ask Durkheim a question at this stage: if every society has an educational system that is just right for it, and if education is socialization of individuals to adjust or fit in with the social milieu, then how and why, for man, do the present anxieties, feelings of uncertainty, almost in all aspects of life exist? Is it because there is a fundamental error in Durkheimian thesis, or is it because educational influences by 'adult generations' have been weak, thereby, younger generations are not being fully socialized? Perhaps Durkheim would consider the second possibility correct. One can then, no doubt, challenge Durkheim and ask: Why is that so? Why have the 'adult generations' failed in socializing others in the past and are failing presently as well? The writer is not aware as to how Durkheim would respond to this query, for in his opinion, Durkheim seems to have "the impulse to synthesize contradictions" and, therefore, in spite of his scientific temper, one can see how he has "sometimes deceived himself" and denied his built-in contradictions in his thought.³

If Durkheimian education is merely influences of

³Kurt H. Wolff (ed.) op. cit., p. 179.

adult generations, and the goal of education is to socialize individuals to fit in with the circumstances -- and there is no evidence to assert otherwise⁴ -- then his education seems to have little meaning or relevance to the present times. If one looks around one finds a persisting and apparently increasing dissatisfaction with the present educational practices in several countries.⁵ Present

⁴ At least the writer is not aware of the contrary evidence.

⁵ Frequent reports of student strikes are an obvious symptom of the 'malady'. The problem is not confined to one country or one region -- it is in the Americas, in Europe, in Asia (for example, India, China, Japan, Indonesia). See, for example, the two new magazines in Canada -- This Magazine is About Schools (Toronto) and Monday Morning (Toronto) which are trying to 'let the steam out', as the phrase goes. It is interesting to note also the following quotation:

The general tendency [of institutions of Higher Education], however, is to produce the 'organization man' who is afraid to challenge the accepted pattern of social behavior and social institutions at the intellectual level and who is too often anxious to worm himself into the good graces of the people who count so that he may be able 'to get on' in life Its business is not primarily to give society what it wants but what it needs and obviously they are not always identical. It [a university] is not a 'community service station', passively responding to popular demands and thereby endangering its intellectual integrity (Report of the Education Commission, 1964-66, Government of India, Delhi, 1966, p. 276).

The authors of the Report require education to change society and to accede to all that society wants. A similar theme seems to occur in Gunnar Myrdal's study: Asian Drama: An Inquiry into the Poverty of Nations (New York: Twentieth Century Fund, 1968, 3 volumes). He argues that the inertia of traditions in South Asian countries (his study is confined to these only) is so overwhelming that unless the social institutions which exist today are overthrown, no substantial reduction in their 'poverty' (mostly in 'economic' terms) is possible. The educational systems of these societies are outdated and

educational practices seem to be out-of-tune with the times, and the demand is that instead of catering to the so-called societal goals, pedagogy must set up new goals for education to strive for, in harmony with the requirements of the times and of life, which are changing in unpredictable ways, and facing unexpected problems.

Though Durkheim has been ambiguous in his usage of the term 'society', it is essential that its connotation be examined carefully. What is 'society', and how does one know what society wants or requires? Obviously there is no consensus, and also this is not the place to discuss these questions. However, there is perhaps little doubt (and here, too, people may have conflicting viewpoints) that when one says "society wants . . .", one has not made a survey of what each individual wants, but it is a statement of either what 'the majority' (in arithmetical terms) wants, or more often what those who are in authority and power want. Popper may well be right when he declares that there is no history of mankind, there is only history of political power.⁶ Also, when one examines the history

need a complete revolution. The attitudes of the people must be changed without which, according to him, nothing is likely to change. Some recent articles are also relevant: William Arrowsmith, "The Shame of the Graduate Schools", Harper's Magazine (March 1966), pp. 51-59; Christopher Jencks and David Riesman, "Where Graduate Schools Fail", The Atlantic Monthly (February 1968), pp. 49-55; Ann M. Heiss, "Graduate Education Today: An Instrument for Change?", Journal of Higher Education, Vol. XXXIX (January 1968), pp. 1-10; Edward J. Shoben, Jr., "Means, Ends, and the Liberties of Education", Journal of Higher Education, Vol. XXXIX (February 1968), pp. 61-68.

⁶ See Karl R. Popper, The Open Society and its Enemies (New York: Harper and Row, Harper Torchbook edition, 1962), Vol. II, p. 270. The entire chapter, "Has History Any Meaning?" seems to have such a theme in his book.

of ideas, one may find that, with time, vested interests and passion get hold of them, and the ideas lose their intellectual vigor and logical structure. Thus, when one talks about 'society' -- its wants, its needs, its goals, is it not possibly true that one is speaking of the wants, needs and goals of those few individuals who have power, or respect, or authority, or who 'count' in some way or another? Durkheimian educational thought then, it seems, has dangerous potentialities, inasmuch as education would be controlled by those in power, and who have, consequently, vested interests; and its goals would be, thus, the goals of its power group or "The Establishment". One may like to examine or see if such a situation exists today. This problem, however, will neither be explored nor discussed in this study.⁸

On the whole, therefore, in the present times, the Durkheimian notion of education appears to have a seriously questionable validity and relevance. His insistence that educational practices in a given society at a given time

⁸ An empirical investigation is required to provide an answer. But the question is not without some support, for, C. Wright Mills in his The Power Elite has thrown some light on a similar theme. John Martin Rich, in his book, Education and Human Values (Reading, Mass: Addison-Wesley Publishing Co., 1968, pp. 1-2) says that education:

has been an instrument for preserving the dominant cultural values of society. Educational institutions invariably have been controlled by the group or class holding the reins of power, and they have used the schools to advance their own interests In civilization after civilization, education has unabashedly served an elite. It has perpetuated, reinforced, and strengthened the values of a select group, usually to the detriment of the majority This is a characteristic feature of educational systems, not only in the past but even today in many countries throughout the world.

should be studied using a functional approach (implying a comparative historical framework) is undoubtedly of use to anyone anytime; but, while doing so, one must not overlook the possibility that these educational practices are often rooted in the vested interests of a select elite controlling social institutions and exercising power in the name of society, democratic or totalitarian. This point Durkheim seems to have ignored while reflecting upon education; but, nevertheless, it is of vital significance and must not be overlooked. Educational practices, in these times, must be established in such a way that they prepare individuals not only to play 'social roles' adequately, but also to think objectively, thereby developing courage and inner confidence 'to fight' vested interests in all social institutions. Perhaps, because of his present biological nature,⁹ man has limitations, but a consistent stress on mental development and scientific temper in man through education may well be helpful, and probably the only way of resolving life's or society's dilemmas today until man becomes a 'superman' and is able to control his biological inheritance completely.

CONCLUSION

To appreciate and understand Durkheimian educational as well as sociological thought, one needs to look at

⁹ Desmond Morris in The Naked Ape (London: Jonathan Cape, 1967), p. 241, considers it a "rubbish" idea that our intelligence in our present evolutionary state, can dominate all our basic biological urges. In this connection ideas propounded by Aurobindo Ghosh are interesting wherein he visualizes a conscious, as opposed to unconscious so far, evolution of man into what he has termed "supramental being" who would be able to go beyond the present human limitations by virtue of mutations in physical, psychological and mental aspects of present life a man leads (or is 'condemned to'!).

the social milieu in which he lived. He perceived French society disintegrating; therefore, he in his studies constantly talks of social solidarity. In his times he found an intellectual milieu which stressed speculation and psychologism; consequently, he attempted to establish the reality of society sui generis, and to develop the science of society, viz., sociology. In his zeal, however, he appears to have gone to the other extreme, equating society to God! This perhaps may be appreciated because when one challenges existing and well-established groups and ideas, which often develop vested interests with time, one often finds that only exaggeration pays and tends to succeed, and this is what he also seems to have done while speaking of 'society'.

His concept of education and its relationship to society appears mostly out-dated in the present times (when according to one point of view 'adult generation' itself seems to require 'influences' to play its 'social role' adequately); but , there is no doubt that he has shown personal courage of conviction and the capacity to think independently (of the existing fads and crazes and trends), thereby leaving a legacy behind, like all brilliant thinkers in human history, for the present generations to examine: to accept whatever is relevant, to reject whatever is irrelevant according to one's needs and goals -- without fear of risks, without being awed by the existing power structures in different social milieux, and with faith in one's convictions and thinking capacity. His legacy is of a sociological thought which ideally should be objective, free of preconceived notions, based on publicly verifiable facts and yet not value-free (since man as such is not value-free, composed of inert matter

only), because a man has a mind to think, to manipulate, to control, to imagine and to visualize his future possibilities and to grow in aspired directions.

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